

Yes, Audience, Mike Can Sing by letitbeme

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Summary: When trying to think of an anniversary present for El, Mike hears a classic love song on the radio, remembers an upcoming talent show at school and gets an idea. But he's gonna need Max's help.

Yes, Audience, Mike Can Sing

It was your average school day at Hawkins High and now Mike Wheeler was being nice and giving his friend, Max Mayfield a ride home since her board was still in the shop and the rest of their friends had various groups and practices. She tried to get a conversation started but Mike clearly wasn't listening and seemed to be lost in thought.

"Penny for your thoughts, Wheeler."

"Huh?" Mike asked getting his mind out of the clouds briefly.

"I was wondering if you were gonna take a direct flight back to reality or if you had to change planes in Denver. What's going on, man? It feels like you're a million miles away even though we're in the same car."

"Sorry, Max, it's just...me and El's anniversary is coming up and I'm drawing a blank on what to do or get for her this year."

"Oh, I see, tough break, my dude" Max said sympathetically. She knew Eleven was his entire world and, being a hopeless romantic, he always did big things or got really thoughtful gifts for her on her birthday, their anniversary, Valentine's, sometimes just a Saturday got something great out of him.

"Hey, it's still a month and a half away. I have faith in you, friend."

"Thanks, Max. You're...you're a good friend."

"I try."

Max then heard something on the radio and immediately got excited.

"Ooh! Mind if I turn it up, Mike?" she asked gesturing towards the radio.

"No, go ahead."

Max immediately turned up the music and started singing along.

Mike recognized the song as a love song from the 60's and lightly chuckled at Max.

"I forget how much you love the older stuff."

"Hey, my dad always said "It's called classic rock for a reason, Maxine!" and besides, this is one of the most romantic songs ever."

Mike was about to make a joke about a girl like her liking romance, but he listened to the song and actually started to remember it and he started thinking something over.

"Who are these guys?"

"They're called The Righteous Brothers. This song is called-"

"I know what it's called! My mom has some of their stuff!...Do you know when the school talent show is?"

"Uh, November 7th, Why?" Max answered confused as to what these two thoughts had to do with each other.

"Novem-That's our anniversary! This is perfect! Do you mind if we go to my place?"

"No, Mike, that's fine" Max said, still running on confused.

Mike quickly pulled up to his house and ran inside, Max following behind him.

"Hello, Michael, Maxine." Karen said to both of the kids.

"Hey Mom, where are your records?" Mike asked in a fast tone.

"They're downstairs, Mike-"

"Thanks, come on, Max!" Mike said pulling the redhead with him, giving Karen a very confused look.

Mike was thumbing through the records as fast as he could while Max stood behind him.

"Mike, what are you looking for?"

"I'll tell you in a minute, Max, Ah, here it is!" he said pulling out the album *Just Once In My Life* by *The Righteous Brothers*.

He carefully took the record out of its cover and put it on the player, cueing up the song from the car, and letting it play before finally turning to talk to Max.

"Okay, I came up with a great plan, I can sign up for the talent show, invite El, and when it's my turn, I'll go up and perform this song! I'll say that it's for our anniversary! Isn't that perfect?"

Max thought it over, "That's actually a really good idea, Mike...except for one thing."

Mike's smile dropped, "What?"

"Your voice. Don't get me wrong, Mike, you're an okay singer, but, with these guys, this song, and this big a gesture, okay won't cut it. You need to get it just right or, I hate to say it, buddy, you'll look like a fool."

Mike looked panicked before Max continued her thought.

"However, I know enough about music that I will help you. I'll teach you how to get your voice to the right tone, what to do with your hands, how many beats to hold certain notes for, with this song, that's very important. It won't be easy, in fact, it's gonna be hard as hell, but if you really want to pull this off, you're gonna need me. What do you say?"

"Max, I will do anything to get this as absolutely close to perfect as possible. I'm in."

"Great. Let's get started."

And so it went. For the next month and a half, whenever they could get time together, while trying not to raise suspicion, Max helped Mike practice his song. Max realized Mike had more singing potential than she gave him credit for, that said, it was still far from easy, and as patient as they tried to be with each other, tensions could boil over at times, like one certain Saturday at Max's house.

"No, no, no! How many times do I have to tell you? You hold the that note for five beats! Five! Not four! And you started that bridge half a beat late! God, it's like teaching french to a bulldog!" Max screamed falling down on her bed.

"Take it easy, Max! Do you really think anyone will really notice?"

Max sat up and said "It doesn't matter if anyone notices, Mike! You said you wanted to get this as close to perfect as possible, right? Well, crap like that is how you make it perfect and impress people, especially your girlfriend! Now, again, from the top!"

Mike could feel his nerves getting thin, "Max, just calm down, okay?"

"I..."she took a breath and counted to ten, "I'm sorry, it's just, El is my best friend, I want this to impress her just as much as you do and..."

"And, what?"

"I liked that you let me in on this, and, I just feel like I'll notice any mistakes you make on the stage, and I wouldn't be able to focus on the good. That's why I'm harping on you to be perfect...I'm sorry, Mike, I know it's too much for you."

Mike leaned down to look her in the face.

"It's okay, Max. I like that you offered to help, and you're actually a pretty good teacher. You're right, I did say I wanted it to be as close to perfect as possible and you just went a little overboard, that's fine."

Max looked at him and smiled, "Thanks."

"You're welcome. I have been having a bit of trouble on my part, anyway."

"What is it?"

"Well, it's whenever I picture actually performing, I just think of hundreds of eyes focused on me and, I get nervous and I lose my concentration."

Max got up and went to the stand where the sheet music they got was

sitting, "I know a trick for that."

"What's that?" Mike asked standing by her side.

"El is the main reason you're doing this, right?"

"Yeah."

"Okay, well, when you picture performing, just imagine she's the only one in the audience and picture her face as she hears your voice and this song and knowing it's all for her, and you'll be just fine."

"And you think that'll work?"

"One way to find out. Now, from the top."

Eventually, the night of the talent show came. Mike was able to get seats for the whole group, including

his parents, Joyce and Hopper. He was backstage warming up, trying to shake how nervous he was, when Max came back to see him.

"Hey, Mike, just came back to see how you were doing."

Mike looked up at her, "Honestly? I've been better. I've been taking antacids all day. My stomach feels like a bowl of split-pea soup."

"Relax, we've been over this a thousand times, you'll be great, just remember, focus on El, focus on El,"

"Focus on El" he said in unison with her, "I know, I got it."

"Okay. Do you know when you'll be up?"

"Yeah, I'm gonna be third. What row are all of you in?"

"The fourth row in the center, speaking of which, I gotta get back, I said I was going to the bathroom, break a leg, dude."

"Thanks...and Max?" he said as she was walking away.

She stopped and turned around, "Yeah?"

"Thanks...for everything...you really are a good friend."

"You're welcome...likewise." she said heading out.

Out front, everyone was waiting for the show to start. Lucas was sitting next to Eleven, saving the seat on his other side for Max when she came back from the bathroom. He looked over and noticed El had a grumpy look on her face.

"You all right?"

El looked at him and sighed, "Lukewarm. I don't know why Mike decided to join this show. He knew our anniversary was tonight and well..." she trailed off.

"Relax, maybe whatever he's doing is something really big for you."

El still looked pensive, "I don't know, he's been acting so weird lately, he's been spending so much time with Max and they've both been so secretive, you don't think they're..."

"No, absolutely not, not a chance! They wouldn't do that to either one of us!" Lucas barked out, starting to get a little worried himself, trying not to think of that possibility.

Max ran back up and sat down next to Lucas, kissing him on the cheek, "Hey! You guys talking about me?" she joked.

"No." Lucas nervously lied.

Finally, the show got underway, the principal came out, gave a little speech and introduced the first performer. As the second performance was underway, Mike was in the wings mumbling to himself, "Focus on El, focus on El, focus on El."

The second performer left the stage and the principal came back out to the microphone, "Up next is Mike Wheeler performing..." he looked at the paper he was holding "A mystery song."

There was some light applause as Mike walked across the stage, and he could see her, El, in the fourth row, in a beautiful dress, looking amazing and suddenly, by some miracle, he wasn't nervous anymore.

El did cheer up a little when she saw him, she thought he looked very handsome in the formal clothes he had on and it made her happy that he was wearing the tweed blazer she got for him for Christmas.

He stepped up to the microphone, adjusted it for his height, and started to speak:

"Thank you, the song I'm gonna perform is actually for someone very special. It's our anniversary. I love you, El."

Her face immediately lit up with happiness, which he noticed when he gestured for the sound booth to start playing the song and the smooth tones of The Righteous Brothers came over the speakers as he put both hands around the microphone and started to sing in a very good baritone voice.

Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh, my-y-y-y-y lo-o-o-o-o-ve, my darling
I've hun-nn-nn-gered for your touch
A lo-o-o-o-o-ng, lonely time
Ti-i-i-i-i-me go-o-o-o-es by so slo-o-owly-y
And time can do so much
A-a-a-a-a-are you-ou-ou-ou-ou still mi-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-ne?(he was nervous about that one but he nailed it)
I-i-i-i-i-i-i need-ee-ee your love
I-i-i-i-i-i-i need your love
God speed your love to-oo-oo-oo-oo-oo me-ee-ee-ee-ee

Lonely rivers flow
To the sea, to the sea
To the open arms of the sea-ea-ea-ea-ea, yeah-ah-ah-ah
Lonely rivers sigh
"Wait for me, wait for me"
I'll be coming home, wait for me

Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh, my-y-y-y-y lo-o-o-o-o-ve, my da-ar-ar-ling
I've hungered hungered for your tou-ou-ou-ou-ouch
A-a-a lo-o-o-o-o-ng, lonely time
Ti-i-i-i-i-me go-o-o-o-es by so slo-o-owly-y
And time can do so much
A-a-a-a-a-are you-ou-ou-ou-ou still mi-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-ne?(nailed it again)

I-i-i-i-i-i-i need-ee-ee-ee your love

I-i-i-i-i-i-i need your love

God speed your love to-oo-oo-oo-oo-oo-oo me-ee-ee-ee-ee-ee

And as the last few notes of the song played, Mike stepped back from the microphone and when it wrapped up, he took a bow and was a little surprised at the thunderous applause he got from the crowd.

He glanced at El, who had a huge smile on her face, tears in her eyes and was clapping harder than anyone.

It killed El that she couldn't see Mike until the end of the show because she just wanted to run back and hug and kiss the most fantastic, sweet, kindhearted boyfriend she could ever ask for that gave her one of the best presents of her entire life.

Eventually, the show ended and all the contestants were called back out onstage to announce the winners. Everyone in the group, especially El, cheered hard for Mike when he came out. Sadly, Mike lost, but, he didn't care, he just wanted to impress his girl and he knew he succeeded.

Afterward, everyone mobbed Mike in the back telling him what a good job he did and what a shame it was he lost and he thanked everyone but he noticed El wasn't there. Apparently, they told her to wait out front for him since they figured what she had to say would be so much no one else would get a word in. Mike admitted they had a point.

They walked out the auditorium doors and El ran up with a shriek and jumped on Mike, wrapping her legs around him and kissing him so hard, his heart skipped a couple beats instead of the one it usually does when they kiss. She pulled back and started telling him, "Mike, that was the most romantic thing ever! You are such an amazing singer! You are so thoughtful, so good, so wonderful! I don't deserve you! I love you so much, Mike!" before Hopper stepped up and got her off of him, "Easy, kid, we're all right here, you know?"

"Sorry, I just didn't expect it and that was the sweetest thing!" she said before finally calming down a little, "Happy anniversary."

Mike looked into her eyes and said back "Happy anniversary, it's true, you know, you are my love, my darling, I hunger for your touch, I'll always need your love and I hope you'll always be mine."

El was still smitten with emotion, "Oh, Mike" she said before pulling him in for another kiss.

Max stepped up and cleared her throat, "Sorry, don't want to toot my own horn here, but, you know all those long notes he was able to hit and how perfect his voice was? That's all me, right here."

Mike couldn't even scoff at how cocky she was being because he knew she was right.

El asked, "What's she talking about?"

Mike got sheepish and said, "Well, you know how we've been going off on our own the last month or so? She was teaching me how to do this song perfectly, and, obviously, it payed off pretty well."

El was happy that this was all cleared up and definitely saw Lucas breathe a sigh of relief.

Eventually, they managed to pull Mike and El apart and everyone started heading out to their cars, Max catching up with Mike.

"Hey, Wheeler! I just wanted to say, honestly, you were so amazing out there, you managed to top my expectations, and they were pretty high to begin with."

"Well, thanks Mayfield, I couldn't have done it without you."

"Makes me wonder what you're gonna do next year to top this one."

Mike's eyes went wide as he realized what Max just said, "Oh...crap."